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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Middle East - G8 Summit

PARIS - Monday, July 17, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Middle East  
G8 Summit

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Although Lebanon leads all of the print and electronic top stories and commentaries, the G8 meeting in Saint Petersburg is the second, and related, item.

Right-of-center Sunday newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche asks: "Who wants Lebanon's death?" The editorial by Jacques Esperandieu laments that the international community worries over the "disproportionate" Israeli riposte instead of focusing on the fact that the "Middle East is on the edge of chaos." Right-of-center Le Figaro's editorial condemns the West for being more preoccupied with getting its

citizens out of Lebanon than with trying to find a solution to end the conflict. The statement issued by the G8 members on the Israeli-Lebanese conflict is seen as "harsh in form and vague in content" by regional editorialist Jean-Claude Kiefer. (See Part C)

Left-of-center Le Monde carries an op-ed entitled "Defending the G8." (See Part C)

Right-of-center Le Figaro reports that bilateral meetings between the U.S. and Russia made it possible to come to an agreement concerning the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel. "The two great Cold War superpowers opened the ball at the G8 with a bilateral meeting which gave a flavor of G2 +6 to the rest of the Summit."

Right-of-center Le Figaro reports that the UN is condemning North Korea "After eleven days of equivocation... A compromise was found between Washington's hard line approach and the moderation advocated by China and Russia."

In left-of-center Le Monde, Washington correspondent Corine Lesnes writes discusses the "Condistas," those Republicans who believe that Secretary of State Rice has a chance at the nomination to be the

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Party's Presidential candidate in 2008. "The Secretary tirelessly repeats that she is not a candidate... but for the Republicans she is the symbol of redemption... and even if she has not made any major breakthroughs on the Iranian or North Korean nuclear issues, she has succeeded in terms of her image. According to a Washington Post poll, she is the most popular person in the Bush Administration in front of the President himself by 20 points... As Secretary of State she finds favor in the eyes of moderate Democrats... In 17 months she has spearheaded an impressive transformation of American diplomacy. Washington has given more to its allies or adversaries than it has ever done before. India was assured of a nuclear cooperation that it had been seeking for over thirty years... Iran has been lured by the promise of direct talks... Contrary to her predecessor Colin Powell... she has the President's ear... When she left the White House she took a certain number of advisors with her including Jim Wilkinson... who has set up a media campaign to boost her image... which surprisingly has been unaffected by the failure in Iraq."

#### (C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

##### Middle East

##### "Urgency"

The editorial by Jacques Esperandieu in right-of-center Sunday paper Le Journal du Dimanche (07/16): "There are plenty of good reasons to mobilize the international community to react faced with the situation in the Middle East and yet division and inefficiency prevail. Without surprise, the U.S. is saying that Israel has the right to defend itself. Most Europeans, including France tends to see the scope of Israeli retaliation as disproportionate... The UN meets but decides nothing... Yet there is an urgency to act. Iraq is in the throes of a full-scale civil war, Iran is continuing its crusade toward acquiring the bomb and the region as a whole is on the verge of explosion."

##### "Irresponsibility"

Left-of-center Le Monde's unsigned editorial notes that (07/16/17): "The international community seems to be more powerless than ever. It is paying the price for years of indifference and passivity with regard to the deterioration of the Israeli Palestinian conflict... In the Middle East the Bush Administration has invented a sort of empty shell called the Quartet that is supposed to provide a framework for negotiations... and whose aim it is to pretend to favor a dialogue between Israeli and Palestinians. The Quartet serves no purpose whatsoever. Who even knows when it met for the last time? All of its members have chosen to remain powerless for various reasons. Since George Bush took office, the U.S. abandoned its role as the 'honest broker' sticking to Israel's position no matter what that may be. Russia has no particular strategy, except to be a thorn in America's side. Europeans have a hard time being heard since politically they do not exist. And as we saw in last Friday's pathetic demonstration at the Security Council, the UN is impotent and a reflection of the unwillingness of the rest of the world."

### "G8 - Out of the Game"

Gerard Dupuy comments in left-of-center Liberation (07/17): "The G8 leaders, the crhme de la crhme of world power, seems to have latched on to the conflict between Israel and Lebanon only to demonstrate, once again, its total incapacity to act in a vaguely effective way in this region... through the conflict with Israel, Hezbollah is seeking to destabilize the West that aside from sending life rafts to its citizens and approving Israel's retaliation while condemning its harshness, shows the extent to which it is out of the game in the Middle East."

### "Getting Involved"

Francois Ernewein in Catholic La Croix (07/17): "In the last few days what ambitious proposals has the international community made to promote peace? No need to rack your brain, there are none. The key to the international community's powerlessness lies in the age-old acceptance of the situation in the Middle East... This disorganized diplomacy has only served to give legitimacy to the various parties in their headlong rush towards violence... instead of telling them once and for all 'enough!'"

### "Powerless"

The editorial by Francois-Xavier Pietri in centrist economic La Tribune (07/17): "We were expecting a G8 that would focus on energy security, but instead it has focused on security in the Middle East and the possible consequences on Western economies... The 80 dollar barrel is just a heartbeat away... And world diplomacy seems completely at a loss... the great powers of the G8 are in fact powerless and the Summit appears to be a forum for settling old scores between Russia, the U.S. and Europe... rather than coming to the aid of staggering Arab diplomacy."

### "Too Powerful"

For Jean-Pierre Bel in regional daily La Nouvelle Republique du Centre (07/17): "The G8 is not powerless, it is too powerful. It has become a symbol of an excess of power that destabilizes the world. The members of the club of 8 are too entangled in protecting their own national interests to be able to act rapidly and decisively in the Middle East."

### "Lebanon : The Wager of Weapons"

Pierre Rousselin editorializes in right-of-center Le Figaro (07/17): "The evacuation of the citizens of the Western countries is intended as a way to empty Lebanon of all of the potential hostages that pro-Iranian Hezbollah could be tempted to take when things, inevitably, get worse... But we must be careful. If the evacuation of our citizens does not go hand-in-hand with a diplomatic initiative, the Lebanese people will see it as the West's abandoning them... The U.S., without whom nothing can be accomplished in the region, have yet to send a high-ranking envoy."

### G8 Summit

#### "Defending the Idea of the G8"

Eric Le Boucher writes in left-of-center Le Monde (07/16-17): "The G8 has a bad image mainly because it is seen at once as being too big and too small, incapable of resolving the global crises of today. Bad because the final statement, prepared in advance by the Sherpas... is the archetype of stonewalling... Do these types of Summits still serve a purpose? If one looks at the four priorities set out by President Chirac in Les Echos on July 13 the question appears particularly relevant. Discussing energy policy without any of the Gulf countries present and when President Putin himself is one of the principal troublemakers seems absurd. And what of the Kyoto Protocol that the U.S. did not ratify and that no country respects? How can global warming be discussed when big CO2 producers such as China and India are absent? Africa? No leader from the continent is present. Iran? This may be the only topic that will be usefully discussed... Reforming existing informal (G8) or formal (UN, IMF, WTO...) international fora is urgent. In this context the idea of the G8 is good... multilateralism may not look like a French-style garden, but so what as long as it continues to bear fruit." STAPLETON